

Questa Del Rio News

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BY ELIZABETH BRUNAZZI, FOOD EDITOR

The Season of Rebirth

Among my best childhood memories from this time of year are the baskets my parents created for me and my two sisters: green shredded paper for nests, fuzzy yellow marshmallow chicks and chocolate rabbits; and the small chocolate eggs wrapped in multi-colored foil. And then there were the egg hunts organized by our community, with prizes for the gold and silver eggs; and real eggs, boiled, dyed, and painted with love for us. What impresses me most with time and memory is how much these events were about sharing this season with children—always the promise of rebirth for us as a human community.

The season of rebirth as it is celebrated around the world, with its various observances and symbols, date far back in history to the pagan, Judaic, Judeo-Christian, and Christian eras. These observances celebrate rebirth following both seasonal and historical periods of deprivation and suffering. In French, the English word for "Easter" and "Passover" is the same: Les Pâques.

With these recipes for four cakes (and maybe some eggs you decorate?) I invite you to be inspired by your own heritage and individual imagination, during this season of rebirth.

Canadian Maple Syrup Cheesecake

Crust:

1/4 C melted butter or plant substitute
2 T maple syrup
1-1/4 C graham cracker crumbs

Combine crust ingredients and press into a 9-inch springform pan, if you have one. Otherwise, use a Pyrex baking or pie dish. Preheat oven to 350°. Bake 5 minutes and cool.

Filling:

3/4 lb organic, light cream cheese
3 eggs
3/4 C maple syrup
2 T flour

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Gradually add maple syrup, blend in eggs and flour, and spoon into pan or dish. Place the pan or dish on a cookie sheet and bake for 35 minutes, or until the center is barely firm. Cool for 20 minutes, cover and chill until ready to serve. To taste, drizzle with maple syrup and pecan halves, or top with fresh raspberries, then drizzle with about 3 T of maple syrup. This is one of my favorite cheesecakes and best desserts ever.

Adapted from Janet Hawkins' recipe, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Citrus Cheesecake from Florida

Filling:

10 oranges, tangerines, or tangelos (or combination) hollowed out. Reserve segments
3 8-oz. packages light cream cheese, preferably organic, at room temperature
1 C organic raw cane sugar
3 eggs
1/2 C plus 2 T of half-and-half
1 t vanilla extract, Madagascar
1/2 t grated lemon zest
1/2 t grated orange and/or tangelo zest
1/2 C segmented orange, tangerine or tangelo sections as reserved: chopped, and for slices and curls to decorate

Topping:

1/4 C chopped macadamia nuts
1 T organic raw cane sugar

Blend cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add eggs one at a time, beating gently. Gently fold in the 1/2 C reserved orange fruit segments. Place the hollowed-out citrus segments in a baking dish (glass Pyrex dish or individual baking dishes). Fill hollowed-out segments with the cheesecake batter. Blend nuts and sugar for the topping and sprinkle over each. Bake at 320° for 15 minutes. Cover loosely and bake an additional 20–25 minutes or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool. Cover and refrigerate until cold. Place each cake on a serving dish and garnish with remaining citrus segments and fresh mint leaves. This is very pretty, makes a lovely holiday offering to guests, and delights children as well.



This basket displays eggs I lovingly collected from Provence, France. The two large eggs are a German craft item—filled with confections, and prized as gifts for children at Easter time. The small egg nestled between them is a hand-painted Ukrainian Easter egg, given to me as a gift when I lived in the East Village, New York City, across the street from the Ukrainian church, which also happened to be next door to the home of famed jazz musician Thelonius Monk!

Photo by Elizabeth Brunazzi

Kosher Orange-Almond Cake

6 large eggs, whites separated
1 C sugar, divided
1-1/2 t orange zest
1/4 C fresh orange juice
1/2 t Kosher salt
1/2 t Kosher-for-Passover almond extract
7 oz (2 C) almond flour

Kosher-for-Passover cooking spray
1/2 C slivered almonds
1 T Kosher-for-Passover powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350°.

Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form, 3–5 minutes. In a separate bowl, beat egg yolks, gradually adding 1/2 C sugar until pale and creamy. Add zest, juice, salt and extract, and beat until blended. Fold in almond flour. Spoon mixture into a 9-inch pan (springform or a Pyrex glass pie plate) coated with cooking spray. Sprinkle almonds around the outside edge. Bake at 350° until cake springs back when lightly touched in the middle, 35–40 minutes. Remove from oven, run knife around the edge of the pan, and cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, carefully using a thin metal spatula if needed. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Adapted from a recipe on the Cookinglight.com, 2022.

Ricotta Cheesecake

4 C part-skim ricotta cheese
4 medium eggs
1 C buttermilk
1/2 C raw cane sugar or honey
2 t pure vanilla extract, preferably Madagascar
Juice and grated rind of 1 lime or 1/2 lemon
1/4 t salt

Combine all ingredients in a blender, or just beat gently to incorporate everything until all is pureed very smooth and fluffy. Pour into lightly buttered pan (springform or a Pyrex glass pie plate). Place in a pan or cookie sheet filled with water. Bake 45 minutes at 375°. Cool, refrigerate, top, garnish, and decorate with a choice of whipped cream or yoghurt, fresh herbs, sliced almonds, and berries.

Adapted from Molly Katzen's *The Moosewood Cookbook*, 1977.



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